

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

MORE THAN TWENTY years ago, my advisor Robert Joe Cutter suggested I study the often-neglected poetry genre, yongwu fu. Since that time, I have always wondered why the poems were produced, and why their numbers rose and fell around the third century. Dr. Cutter often encouraged me when I ran into difficulties, saying, very slowly, surely, and calmly, “You are the expert, and you will do it.” With that encouragement, I never quit. I hope this book brings a measure of delight to my beloved advisor.

Ten years ago, I was offered the chance to teach world history and was invited by Fan Ziyi 范子烨, a senior scholar at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, to translate two major historical works for China Book Company 中華書局: *Selections from the History of the Later Han* 後漢書選譯 and *Selections from Comprehensive Mirror for Aid in Government* 資治通鑑選譯. This experience inspired me to connect literary writing with the Silk Roads. When I first showed my book proposal to Dr. Fan in Beijing in 2011, he was very supportive, commenting that “this project can easily receive funds of one million dollars.” I did not receive a million dollars, but I was awarded the Released Time for Research grant from Kean University and financial support from the Share Foundation; I was also nominated three times for a Fulbright scholarship and received a Fulbright Specialist grant.

It was Sue Gronewold, my colleague and mentor at Kean University, and her husband, Peter Winn, a renowned historian of Latin America, who brought me to the world of global history. They have continuously offered me priceless advice on my career development, scholarly research, and even personal matters. Both of them read the book and helped me to strengthen arguments.

After studying these poems from a world-history perspective, it has become clear to me that a substantial number of the objects written about during this period were foreign, and that substantial numbers of the fu are sources for modern terms for these objects, even those whose currency in Chinese culture has since vanished. This discovery, in the context of what I knew about the period, encouraged the speculation that these fu were written with a specific purpose. I started with the pomegranate, since it is decidedly foreign. My colleagues, Chris Bellitto, Elizabeth Hyde, Brian Regal, and Nira Gupta-Casale at Kean University read that chapter, commented on it, and helped me tremendously in revising it. In the summer of 2015, Chen Zhi 陳致, then the Director of Jao Tsung-I Academy of Sinology at Hong Kong Baptist University, invited me to give a talk on the pomegranate, where I received many valuable comments. That month I was invited to give the same talk at the Institute of Literature at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences in Beijing, where I received comments and encouragement from Liu Yuejing 劉躍進 and Jiang Yin 蔣寅, two famous scholars in the field of classical Chinese literature. The article on the pomegranate was published with *Early Medieval China*, and Michael Farmer, the editor of the journal, helped me shape and revise it. The thirty-six fu on six objects that comprise this study suggest that the genre of yongwu fu was not simply a literary exercise, but rather an instrument for filtering foreign objects, ideas,

and culture, thus rendering them suitable for Chinese tastes. Because I was excited and eager to share my discoveries while writing this book, the following scholars welcomed my project and supported it with talk or grant invitations: Keith Knapp, ABE Yokinobu, Rong Xinjiang 榮新江, Pan Shuxian 潘殊閒, Zhang Jianwei 張建偉, and Zong Fan 踪凡.

For years, I have received help from Kean University librarians, two of them being Chrisler Pitts and Craig Anderson; and generous support from Zhao Chunlan 趙春蘭 and Yang Gang 楊剛 with resources. I am honoured to have received academic inspiration and support from the following scholars: my Chinese advisor Han Zhaoqi 韓兆琦 on Chinese history, Zhang Hong 張弘 on Chinese Buddhist literature, Wang Zhipeng 王志鵬 on Dunhuang Studies, Tang Jigen 唐際根 and Ji Kunzhang 吉焜璋 on Chinese archaeology, Liu Zheng 劉正 and Cheng Tsaifa 鄭再發 on Chinese philology, Arun Kumar and Nirmala Sharma on Buddhist arts and texts, and Jacquelyn Stonburg on early medieval European arts.

I have been touched by the sincere support from David Knechtges, whom I call Shiye 師爺, as a way to reflect our academic relationship and also my reverence for his help and scholarship. Dr. Knechtges read the introduction and the first two chapters, giving suggestions line by line. After I presented part of my project at the American Oriental Society Western Branch at Stanford University in 2018, Dr. Knechtges told me, “You don’t know how much I am pleased by your work.” This sentence encourages me to spare no effort to go on reading and writing on classical Chinese literature for years to come and I am eternally grateful to him.

Meghan Fang 方耿美 read this book carefully, provided countless valuable comments, and spent hours with me on Zoom to clarify and improve the manuscript. Elizabeth Hollander offered professional guidance on revising the entire manuscript. The anonymous reviewer helped me to improve my arguments. Stephen West, Nicholas Morrow Williams, and Danna Messer from the press offered me friendship and professional assistance, which made the publishing process possible and joyful.

I would like to dedicate this book to my family. Kong Xianbang 孔憲邦, my father, was the first person who introduced me to the field of classical Chinese literature. He told me that “humanities are an all-purpose adhesive.” I chose to believe it. Tian Jinfeng 田金鳳, my mother, believes I am the best, and her belief encourages me to become better; she spent five years in America taking care of my three kids, which is the best gift I could ever ask for. Yang Xinsong 楊新嵩, my husband, cheers for me when I succeed, and complains about unfair treatment if I fail; he provides me the needed financial and spiritual support that any working woman needs to pursue a career dream. I hope Dingwen, Dingyan, and Dingyi will forgive me for spending more time on my research than on them.

I cannot overstate my gratitude to all these people mentioned above. Without them, this decade-long journey would not have started, nor culminated in this book.